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## EXTENSION BULLETIN No. 58

# COLOR AND DESIGN IN RELATION TO DRESS

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By Authority of Hon. Geo. H. Malcolm, Minister of Agriculture and Immigration.

# COLOR AND DESIGN IN RELATION TO DRESS

## PART I.—COLOR

Colors are very similar to music, whose varied strains work upon the sentiments and passions; they are symbols or emblems. and have also a psychological effect and the power of suggesting to the mind certain ideas, quite apart from anything connected with their physical nature. We note that sharp contrasts have a disturbing influence, and while strong colors such as red and orange, arouse us, we can feel the softer influence of other color treatments.

Red has long been recognized as the color of violence, danger, passion, barbarism and war. Blue and green are soothing to the nerves, violet has a tranquilizing effect, and there is no doubt that nature provides vast fields of green because it is most favorable in its effect upon humanity. Everyone is susceptible to the influence of color; and in matters of well-dressing, knowledge and appreciation of this subject are requisites to success.

The advancement in civilization of a race can always be judged by the degree of brilliancy and crudity of the color it chooses. Wherever primitive races live, crude primary colors are much in use, but natural artistic instinct guides these people to combine colors into ornament that is not unharmonious

Modern civilization is not satisfied with primary hues; we prefer them in subdued tones, so it is necessary to have some system of combining the colors into harmonious color schemes, which may be applied to house decoration, furnishings, costumes, or any other use where color is desired. To get that harmony, some understanding of the principles of color and their application is necessary. The standard colors as they appear on the chart are too brilliant for house decoration or costume, except in small quantities.

In the desire to be up-to-date, women often blindly adopt the season's new and fashionable color, with a total disregard as to whether it suits them or not In dress, as in all other branches of art, there are laws which regulate its color combinations and their effect upon the complexion of the wearer. There are five fundamental colors,—red, yellow, green, blue, purple, which have interesting and important combinations, and they form the basis of all color harmonies. There are two kinds of color harmony:

1. The harmony of analogy—related colors.
2. The harmony of contrast—complementary or opposite colors.

Analogous colors are neighboring colors, as yellow and red, yellow and green, etc. Two neighbors unite to make a hue which is a suggestion of both, thus —

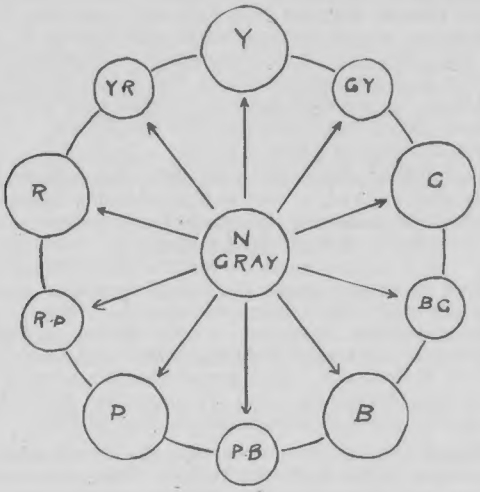


Figure 1—Color Circle.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Green and yellow | unite | to | make | green yellow | (G Y) Grass Green. |
| Blue and green | " | " | " | blue green | (B G) Peacock blue. |
| Blue and purple | " | " | " | purple blue | (P B) Violet. |
| Purple and red | " | " | " | red purple | (R P) Plum. |
| Red and yellow | " | " | " | yellow red | (Y R) Orange. |

By combining related colors or those side by side in the color circle, we have a harmony of analogy. Great care should be taken that the colors chosen are not too much alike, and if they appear to need a touch of bright color a little of the complement of the principal color may be added. For example, the analogous colors of blue and purple may be improved by a touch of yellow red (orange), the complementary color of blue.

We must next consider the opposites in the color circle, called complementary colors or the harmony of contrast.

A line drawn from yellow through the circle finds its opposite in P B (purple blue), while one drawn from red finds its opposite in B G (blue green).

If any two opposites are mixed, they unite to form gray, but if they are placed side by side, they enhance each other, by their difference, and are said to be complementary. By combining tones which come from these sets of complements, we have a harmony of contrast. In the harmony of contrast there is a great danger of the contrast being too strong to be pleasing. This can be avoided by having neutralized colors which appear grayer, and the contrast is not so extreme.

In the choice of a color we must consider the person, the age, complexion and color of the hair and eyes.

The colors of the last two have always been considered as happy suggestions for the color of a gown.

There are two distinct types of complexions, each of which embraces several minor types which display differences in the tints or hues of the skin, hair and eyes.

The two main types are:
(1) The Blonde type.
(2) The Brunette type.

These may again be subdivided into:
(1) The Fair Blonde.
(2) The Ruddy Blonde.
(3) The Pale Brunette.
(4) The Florid Brunette.

There is an intermediate type which may be considered to occupy a place between the Ruddy Blonde and the Pale Brunette and also many variations of these five general types which display slight differences in the tones or hues of the skin, hair and eyes, and it is impossible to separate these minor types from one another or to lay down hard and fast color combinations for special application, but it may be possible for any woman to classify her own appearance between any of the types described and so decide respecting the colors best suited for her.

**The Fair Blonde.**—Blue eyes, pale pure skin, flaxen hair. Green is the most favorable color for this type as it will supply a richer glow to the skin, more depth to the color of the eyes and a richness and warmth to the hair. Dark green is not so favorable, as the contrast is too great with the extreme fairness of the complexion. Blue is also suitable for the Fair Blonde and by reflection adds richness to blue eyes, and, being the complementary of orange, it enriches all varieties of flaxen hair. Dark blue, while not so trying as dark green, has a bleaching effect; generally speaking, a blue having a slight inclination towards the green scale is preferable. Neutral colors and black, though somewhat gloomy in effect, are favorable to all types of the fair blonde, also white, which is suitable to every complexion that has an agreeable natural tint. The colors to be avoided are,—red, orange, yellow, purple and brown.

**The Ruddy Blonde.**—Dark blue eyes, warm colored skin inclining to rose red, hair of a rich warm brown inclining to red. The same colors recommended for the Fair Blonde are suitable for the Ruddy Blonde, but deeper tones and less pronounced hues are desirable and such greens and blues that have a tendency to add orange and red to the complexion should be avoided. In proportion as the complexion increases in its natural color, duller tones must be selected. Blues inclining towards the gray and green scales are to be preferred to those inclining towards the purple scale.

**The Pale Brunette.**—Deep brown or black eyes, skin pale with a tendency to sallowness and hair of a dark rich brown or brown black. Light and dark colors will suit this type better than medium tones, the light harmonizing with the complexion and the dark with the hair and eyes. Medium tones are generally injurious to the pale brunette, as they reduce the vivid expression which is her greatest charm. Creamy white can be used with better effect than white, as the latter accentuates any sallowness that may be in the complexion, while black is a trying color, especially glossy black, although it is analogous to the hair and eyes.

Blue of a pronounced hue must be studiously avoided, especially all light tones, and if worn at all should be dark and broken in color.

Warm brown, claret color, deep russet, old rose, broken reds, gold color and maize can be worn; the last two colors form an agreeable contrast to the hair and eyes.

Colors to be avoided are light blues, light or bright greens, pale violets, purples of all hues and positive pinks and any color calculated to increase the natural sallowness of the complexion. This type is the most difficult of all the types to dress effectively.

**The Florid Brunette.**—The most perfect of all the types of female beauty, has eyes of darkest brown, rich coloring of peculiar depth and hue and black hair. Care should be taken not to weaken this beautiful harmony by objectionable colors in dress.

Rich maize, yellow and deep gold color contrast favorably with the eyes and hair and harmonize with the hues and tints of the skin. All reds which are not too flaming, maroon, rose pink and dark blue are also suitable.

The colors to be avoided are:—Light blue and green, violet, violet-pink, and purples of all hues; and, as a general rule the poet is right when he says, "Black suits the fair. White suits the dark." A woman of medium tones needs surroundings that harmonize with her, such as old pink, old blue, dull red and non-aggressive greens.

The woman whose hair is gray will have a problem all her own, as so much will depend on the color of her eyes and complexion. She can generally wear grays, but not lighter than the gray of her hair, also dull blue, black, creamy white and a mixture of black and white. Before deciding on a gown of any

other color she must consider carefully her individual coloring, but if she has been in the habit of doing this before the graying of her hair, it will now be an easy matter to choose the color that will be most becoming.

Perhaps of all colors, the effect of violet on the complexion is most unsatisfactory. It causes the skin to appear sallow and even imparts a tint of yellow, (the color that is complementary), and no one of the blonde type can use this color without appearing sickly and less pleasing. Those who, for some reason, have a special liking for hues of the purple scale, should wear some creamy white material adjoining the face. Most women look better in white, so white is the universal wedding gown, the party dress for children and where practical, the summer dress for adults. White is worn universally by men and women next the face, the reason being that surrounding white shows up what little color one may possess: a creamy white can be used with better effect by those whose skins have lost their freshness.

Gray is a medium between white and black. While it renders an adjacent color less brilliant, at the same time it takes to itself a tint that is complementary to that adjacent color. In other words, gray besides green seems pinkish, hence if one wishes to obtain this pinkish tint in the gray, it is not necessary to tint the gray, it gets this tint by reflection.

Black is always desirable as an associate with luminous colors, although with some sombre colors, such as blue and violet, black assists in making a pleasing harmony of analogy. It does not, however, associate so well with two colors one of which is luminous, as light green, and the other sombre, as violet, —as with two luminous colors as light green and yellow.

A woman should not follow general rules without first studying her individual coloring. She should have her favorite color, which should be the one that is most becoming to her; and she should make that color predominate in her wardrobe. The choice of correct color in dress is an art not to be acquired at once. It comes gradually and always requires constant thought and attention.

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## PART 2.—COSTUME DESIGN

A piece of work well done brings to the beholder a sense of satisfaction: there is no desire to change a line or area or to vary any of the tone relations; so with a costume, every part must be related, in form, line and color and suitable to the wearer.

Dame Fashion controls design in dress to a great extent, but there are some things she cannot control and these we must decide for ourselves. A fashionable costume is not made for any particular person, the chief element is its newness or novelty—something which strikes the eye, and one result of following the dictates of Dame Fashion is a false standard which raises the cost of living.

An artistic costume is made to express the individuality and personality of the wearer, careful consideration must be given to all details and accessories so as to accent the lines of the figure. In buying a ready-made dress where many dresses are made of the same pattern, it is well to make a change in the collar, buttons or revers, so as to give it individuality. The choice of a design must be one that is becoming to the figure, not one which one sees and fancies, and which may be totally unsuitable; and in making a selection, as well as in the making of a costume, there are many factors to be considered. Material, color and design are so closely related that it is hard to say which should be emphasized most, besides we must also remember the use to which the costume is to be put and the season, occasion and time of day when it is to be worn. It should also be an aid to beatuy.

In the choice of the material, we have to think of the wearing quality, color and design from a hygienic and economic standpoint. Generally speaking, rough or dull materials are more becoming, especially for stout figures, than those of glossy finish. One is always safe in choosing a plain color, if uncertain about figured goods. A large plaid will add to the ap-

parent width of a figure and so should only be worn by a woman of slender proportions, while stripes will give the effect of height to a short, stout figure.

For the selection of the color for a gown, see Part 1 of this Bulletin. The first point is the line of a design which is either curved or straight and is used to call attention to some point of interest. Straight lines are severe, but they give dignity and strength as seen in the tailored suit. Curved lines are beautiful; they express joy and life and are seen in the soft draped materials of evening dress. The use of horizontal and vertical lines is to create a harmonious arrangement of lines and shapes so as to give unity, balance and variety. The material used will also affect the design. Some materials are soft and pliable and lend themselves to varied treatment, while others are stiff and necessitate a severe line. Coarse or fine weaves, dull or lustrous surfaces and patterns all have an influence on the design.

Fig. 2

The height and breadth of a woman will also influence the selection. The tall woman requires lines that will appear to increase her breadth and therefore decrease her height, while the broad woman must adopt vertical lines that add to her height. Full, loose blouses as well as plaids of striking colors are only suitable for slender people. Note the effects of horizontal and vertical lines in spaces of the same size.

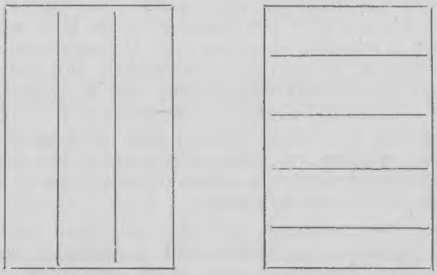

Fig. 3.

Fig. 3.—A large plaid will add to the apparent width of a figure, while stripes give the effect of height.

The principles of design referring to the monotonous repetition of lines and areas must never be forgotten.

### Horizontal Divisions and Lines

The depth of a V neck should not repeat the length of the face; the lifting or dropping of the belt affects not only the skirt, but also the area of the face plus exposed neck and must be considered with reference to both. A circular or slightly rounded yoke should not seem to be the same roundness as the head if worn by a person whose face-lines suggest rotundity.

Within the area of the skirt, the same stricture as to monotonous repetition holds good. Peplum bands, tunics and tucks are subject to it. Hems should give weight and support. The space between the long tunic and hem should not repeat the depth of the hem. All circular bands, tucks and trimmings on or at the foot of the skirt decrease the height, as do all horinzontal lines such as square collars, girdles, or belts that confine the material closely.

### Vertical Lines

A waiscoat, collar or revers should not repeat the space that is left between it and the sleeve line.

Box or side pleats should differ in width from the spaces between them.

Great care should be exercised in designing skirts, a narrow front panel on a stout figure accentuates the breath; also in the design of waists, as, for example, moving the under-arm seam backwards gives the back a narrow appearance, while to move it forward has the opposite effect. The same would be true of the shoulder seams and lines of the skirt.

Decoration must never be applied to dress when use is sacrificed. It must only be used where it will give the appearance of strengthening or enriching the structural design and should be incorporated into the design, not merely stuck on. If the arm's eye(*), neckline and waist-line are good, they are decoration in themselves. An artistic costum does not consist of a dress alone,—hat, shoes, gloves, etc., must also be considered. We must follow fashion only so far as it is artistic.

"Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to cast the old aside."

—Pope.

(*)The arm's eye is the opening in the garment for the sleeve.

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